An exact

COPY OF A LETTER,

Sent to *William Laud* late Arch-bishop of *Canterbury*, now Prisoner in the Tower, *November* the 5. 1641. At which his Lordship taking exceptions, the Author visited him in his owne person: and having admittance to him, had some private discourse with him; concerning the cruelty, in which he formerly raigned in his power. The substance whereof is truly composed by the Author himselfe. Wherein doth appeare a sign of complying with the times, and some hopes of his Repentance.

London Printed for H. W. and T. B. 1641.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

An exact Copy of a Letter, sent to the Bishop of *Canterbury*, now prisoner in the Tower,

Novemb.the 5. 1641.

My Lord.

YOur participating the sodain evils, & daily alterations incident to terrene frailty, and Natures imbecility, hath occasioned me, as well as others, to passe my judgment on your former course of life; and though I doe with most consent, you have done evill, yet doe I not with many consent, you have done it knowingly, but rather ignorantly, &c. by imprisoning Gods people, unjust proceedings, &c. The complainents in this case, are the Delinquents themselves, many of which will not be perswaded to have such a charitable thought, as I have of you: and I verily beleeve, that men do omit the Christian duty to pray for you; wherfore, my humble request unto your Lordship is, that you would be pleased to condiscend so far below your self, as to vouchsafe by way of answer hereunto, to vindicate your owne innocencie, and my charity. So also, shall they I hope, who are otherwise minded, be convinced of their harsh and uncharitable Censure, and so be brought to be otherwise minded: that so I with them, and they with me, may with one accord say, concerning you and other offenders, after the examples of our Savior, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*: and with his Martyr Stephen *Lord lay not this sinne to their charge*,

My Lord I am,

Your Lordships in all humblenesse, *A.*

The letter being delivered to my Lords owne hand: he read it over the messinger being by, to whom he told that the Author had abused him: and done him wrong: which when the author understood, he went himselfe to him the next Lords day to the Tower, where he had admittance to his presence.

Of whom first he craved pardon for boldnesse; but the Bishop, laying aside that complementing with him, rebuked him for his letter, especially for charging him with imprisoning Gods people.

He answered, my Lord, quoth he, I have been both an Eye and an Eare-witnesse at the high commission court, when men truly fearing God, have bin called to the Bar, and your Lordship hath commanded to give them the oath which when they have refused, you have committed them to prison: No, quoth my Lord, it is well knowne I have shewed great favour and clemency to those obstinate men, in that I have sometime forborne them a twelve moneth together; and have in the meane time referred them to Godly and learned Doctors and Ministers, for satisfaction in that point: and when they out of wilfulnesse & obstinacy, would not be satisfied, I could doe no lesse by the order of the Court then commit them to prison.

Then he told my Lord, that he was confident it was not out of wilfulnesse, nor obstinacy, that they refused the Oath, but rather out of tendernesse of conscience, they being not satisfyed of the lawfullnesse of it.

That is more then ytu know, quoth my Lord:

It may be, quoth he, I know some of the men, and their conversation, that they are very godly men, and you know my Lord, our Savior warrants to judge the Tree by the fruites:

Stay

Stay, quoth my Lord, you and I differ in that point.

Then my Lord, said the man, it seemes you did it ignorantly according to my thoughts of you not knowing them to be the servants of God:

I had nothing to do: to judge their persons said the Bishop, nor question whether they were the servants of God or no, I judge all to be the servants of God untill they apparently shew the contrary, but their action I judge to be evill, and what a matter was it to imprison 3. or 4. of them in a twelve months space, and in the meane time let thoulands in the City goe free, and if we had not taken such a course with some of them, the number would have so increased, and men would have taken liberty to have done what they list, as now we see they do: since we see authority, suppressed:

Then he told the Bishop that he makes no doubt, my Lord, if it please the Lord that the Parliament goe on they will take order that men shall not doe what they list, and though it seeme good unto them to suppresse that government, which hath bin heretofore, yet I hope they will establish another.

I pray God they may, for it is a lamentable thing to consider what disorder there is amongst people, at this time when men are suffered to frequent Conventicles, without Restraint.

Nay, therein my Lord you much mistake, for though I my selfe am a meane Scholler: and therefore know not so well as your Grace, what a Conventicle is: yet have I heard that a conventicle is properly, when a company of men meet together, to a wicked intent, to plot & devise mischiefe to the Church or State: which I am certaine, these men you meane are far from; for though I my selfe have not much frequented such Assemblies: for which I think, I have rather cause to condemne, then justifie my selfe. Yet am I sure, that in their Assemblies, they pray earnestly for the King, and all in Authority.

Tell me, quoth the Bishop, what warrant have they to meete, it may be forty or threescore together, on such an occasion.

My Lord, quoth he, you know the prophet Malachi saith, then they that feared the Lord, spake often one to another, and doth not the Apostle command us, not to forsake the fellowship of the Saints, but to edifie one another. Then the Bishop told him, that he said not that, without the consent of Authority: can they not doe this neighbor, with neighbor in publike Congregations.

My Lord, quoth he, it may be these men are perswaded in their consciences, that the Lord calls them to humbling themselves, in fasting and prayer: and it may be authority doth not see it meet to appoint a day: is it evill in them then, some two or three families, it may be ten or twelve persons to meet together to spend a day on that occasion. And they cannot doe this alone by themselves; for men are apt to be dull and drousie when they are alone: and therefore they thinke it meet to be together, to stir up one another, as you know, my Lord, the more fewell is laid on the fire, the better it burnes, & the more it flames.

When he heard this, he smiled, and almost laughed out: flames; indeed, I thinke so, but said he in your Letter, you *quote Scripture*, that some in killing Gods Saints, shall thinke they doe him service, and you say, you take me to be one of them. But I thinke, if you rightly understand your selfe, you would take your selfe to be one of them: for what warrant have you to call me a sensuall man? We say you judge the tree by the fruits, I pray you, what fruits have you seene to judge so of me.

My Lord, quoth he, I have seene and heard such things at the high Commission Court as have caused me to conclude undoubtedly: if you had bin inlightned with the true knowledge of Iesus Christ, you would not have sitten there, though the place were never so honourable.

Why quoth the Bishop what things have you seene and heard.

First

First my Lord said he, I will tell by experience as touching me, selfe: I have beene sealed on by your Pursevant, and had to the registers Office, and beene bound over to the Court, and there taken oath, and have come againe to the Regisers Office and there waited many a dayes, and at last have beene examined and afterwards waited againe at the Court, and yet never heard more of it: but indeed it was but the pursevants malice to bring me in. But is not this a miserable thing, my Lord, that I and others should be thus served, and must never know their accuser, nor recover any dammage.

Then he told him, that it was not in the power of that Court to give dammage: or else I could willingly have given it many times, and as for calling you in without any accuser, it was in our power to do it according to the Law of the Court, and the Kings advocate was to accuse you: but did ever any of you come to me in the week day, and pray me to let you know your accuser, or dismisse you, and I denyed it.

No my Lord, quoth he, I cannot say you did.

Then my Lord asked him what his name was, and what was the matter he was brought in for: for that you say, quoth he, you were to served.

I pray my Lord, quoth he, spare me in that, for I am not willing to tell you my name, and indeed the knowledg of it would be no gaine to you. but might be hurtfull to me: for it is not unpossible, but you may come into authority againe, and then you may call me before you, & chide me for this my bold attempt.

Even as pleaseth God, quoth the Bishop: but I will here passe my word before your friend, meaning the Messenger that carryed the Letter, that you shall never heare more of it: no if you have such thoughts of me, you are deceived in me, and many of you have bin much mistaken in me.

But yet he told my Lord, he desired to be spared in

that,

that. Well if you think it meet to tell me your name quoth the Bishop, doeas you please. Then the Author took occasion to envie against the Officers of the Court, and especially the Pursevants, seeing they were the notoriousest Drunkards and Swearers as could be found amongmen. And he said, I am perswaded that if your Lordship had bin inlightned, you would not have suffered such about you. Alas, said he, it cannot be helped, for none but such will be in those places. I pray consider that the Lord Mayors Sergeants are not the honestest men.

Then was there speeched had about those men they call Puritans and precisians. And the Bishop affirmed it twise over, that he thought in his conscience, there were as honest men given them that name, as any were in London, we cannot, said he, be to pure, if we consider the strictnesse of Gods Law: but yet, said he, I am perswaded, that many of those simple-hearted men are seduced, sometimes by others that are more cunning then they, but I ever had a tender care over the conscience of men. I stand not on the word puritan, but if a man be an honest man, what ever he is I doe approve of him. Indeed, my Lord, quoth he, it may be, there may be some Hypocrites that may have that name put upon them, as you know among our Saviours Disciples there was one Iudas, but yet, my Lord, it is pitty the true-hearted should fare the worse for their sake.

BRITISH MUSEUM

FINIS.